



Report to the Subcommittee on
Strategic Forces, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

July 2008

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

Actions Needed to Improve Process for Identifying and Addressing Combatant Command Priorities



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Why GAO Did This Study

In 2002, the Department of Defense (DOD) established the Missile Defense Agency to develop and deploy globally integrated ballistic missile defenses to protect the U.S. homeland, deployed forces, friends, and allies. To deliver an operational capability as quickly as possible, the agency was not subject to traditional DOD requirements and oversight processes. While directed to work closely with the combatant commands, the agency was not required to build missile defenses to meet specific operational requirements. GAO was asked to assess the extent to which DOD has developed a process that identifies, prioritizes, and addresses overall combatant command priorities as the Missile Defense Agency develops ballistic missile defense capabilities. To conduct its work, GAO reviewed relevant documents and visited several combatant commands, the Missile Defense Agency, Joint Staff, and other DOD organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD improve its process for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command priorities by completing and publishing guidance that clearly defines each organization's responsibilities; establishing effective methodologies; comparing the Missile Defense Agency's funding plans to the commands' priorities; and providing a DOD-wide perspective on the commands' priorities. DOD generally agreed with GAO's recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-740](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton, 404-679-1816, or pendletonj@gao.gov.

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

Actions Needed to Improve Process for Identifying and Addressing Combatant Command Priorities

What GAO Found

DOD has taken some steps to address the combatant commands' ballistic missile defense needs, but it has not yet established an effective process to identify, prioritize, and address these needs, or to provide a DOD-wide perspective on which priorities are the most important. U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005. Although the process is still evolving, the Missile Defense Agency has addressed some combatant command capability needs. However, even as they move forward with the process, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have not yet overcome three interrelated limitations to the process's effectiveness:

- First, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have not put into place the approved and complete guidance needed to implement the Warfighter Involvement Process, which would clearly define each organization's respective roles and responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing the combatant commands' capability needs. This has left the combatant commands without an agreed-upon mechanism for influencing agency investments.
- Second, the Missile Defense Agency has lacked clear information about how to best address the commands' needs, and until recently has not clearly communicated how it has adjusted its investments in response to these needs. Without such information, the commands have not been able to provide feedback to the Missile Defense Agency about how well the agency has addressed their priorities in its funding plans.
- Third, senior civilian DOD leadership has not been involved in adjudicating potential differences among the commands' priorities. Instead, U.S. Strategic Command has consolidated and submitted the commands' prioritized capability needs to the Missile Defense Agency without first vetting these priorities through senior civilian DOD officials with departmentwide responsibilities for assessing risk and allocating resources. As a result, the Missile Defense Agency has not benefited from receiving a broader, departmentwide perspective on which of the commands' needs were the most significant.

DOD has established a new board to advise senior Office of the Secretary of Defense officials on ballistic missile defense priorities; however, whether this board will be involved in reviewing or adjudicating differences among the commands' priorities is unclear. Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command officials stated that the Warfighter Involvement Process is evolving. However, unless and until they overcome these interrelated limitations, DOD remains at risk of not effectively providing the combatant commands with the missile defense capabilities they need.

Contents

| | | |
|---------------|--|----------|
| Letter | | 1 |
| | Results in Brief | 5 |
| | Background | 6 |
| | Warfighter Involvement Process Has Helped the Missile Defense Agency Address Some Capability Needs but the Process Faces Key Limitations | 10 |
| | Conclusions | 29 |
| | Recommendations for Executive Action | 30 |
| | Agency Comments and Our Evaluation | 31 |

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Appendix I | Scope and Methodology | 35 |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------|

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------|
| Appendix II | The 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List | 38 |
|--------------------|---|-----------|

| | | |
|---------------------|--|-----------|
| Appendix III | Comments from the Department of Defense | 41 |
|---------------------|--|-----------|

| | | |
|--------------------|--|-----------|
| Appendix IV | GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments | 45 |
|--------------------|--|-----------|

| | | |
|---------------|---|----|
| Tables | | |
| | Table 1: Ballistic Missile Threat Categories | 7 |
| | Table 2: Organizations and Offices Contacted during Our Review | 37 |
| | Table 3: Capabilities on the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List | 39 |

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Abbreviation | |
| DOD | Department of Defense |

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 31, 2008

The Honorable Ellen O. Tauscher
Chairman
The Honorable Terry Everett
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

In 2002, the President directed the development and deployment of a globally integrated ballistic missile defense system to protect the United States, deployed forces, friends, and allies from the threat of ballistic missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction. Also in 2002, the Secretary of Defense established the Missile Defense Agency and directed it to develop and deploy a useful military capability to detect, track, intercept, and defeat short-, medium-, intermediate-, and long-range ballistic missiles in all phases of flight.¹ With the establishment of the Missile Defense Agency, the Secretary of Defense delegated it the authority to manage all ballistic missile defense systems then under development by the military services. Funded at \$8 billion to nearly \$10 billion annually since its creation, the Missile Defense Agency is responsible for managing the largest research and development program in the Department of Defense (DOD) budget. Since the 1980s, DOD has spent more than \$100 billion to develop and deploy missile defenses.

To expedite the delivery of an operationally capable missile defense system to the combatant commands, the Secretary of Defense directed that the Missile Defense Agency would not be subject to DOD's traditional joint requirements determination and oversight processes. Combatant commanders are responsible for performing missions assigned to their command by the President or the Secretary of Defense. These

¹A missile attack involves four phases from launch to impact: (1) the boost phase is the period immediately after launch when the missile's booster stages are still thrusting and typically lasts 3–5 minutes for intercontinental ballistic missiles; (2) the ascent phase is when the booster stages have stopped thrusting and dropped away leaving a warhead and possible decoys; (3) the midcourse phase, lasting for about 20 minutes for intercontinental ballistic missiles, begins after the missile has stopped accelerating and the warhead travels through space; and (4) the terminal phase begins when the warhead reenters the atmosphere and lasts approximately a minute or less.

responsibilities include deterring attacks against the United States, its territories, possessions, and bases, and employing appropriate force should deterrence fail. Under DOD's traditional requirements processes, the combatant commands play a key role in setting operational requirements for new weapon systems. However, DOD concluded that streamlined executive oversight, instead of its traditional process, was needed to rapidly deliver needed missile defense capabilities to the commands. Instead, the Secretary of Defense gave the Missile Defense Agency expanded responsibility and authority to define the ballistic missile defense system's technical requirements, change goals and plans, and allocate resources. Although not required to build systems to meet specific operational requirements as it would under traditional DOD processes, the Secretary of Defense directed the Missile Defense Agency to work closely with the combatant commands when developing ballistic missile defense capabilities.

Other organizations have a stake in developing defenses against ballistic missiles. Even as DOD established the Missile Defense Agency, the President established U.S. Strategic Command in 2002 to more effectively and efficiently anticipate and counter the diverse and increasingly complex global threats the United States faces for the foreseeable future, including the threats posed by ballistic missiles.² In 2003, the President made U.S. Strategic Command responsible for advocating for desirable missile defense characteristics and capabilities on behalf of all combatant commands to the Missile Defense Agency.³ To carry out this responsibility, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005.⁴ A primary focus of the

²A previous unified command, also called U.S. Strategic Command, had been established in 1992 and had primary responsibility for strategic nuclear forces. The new U.S. Strategic Command was formed from combining the nuclear deterrence mission of the previous command and the space and computer network operations missions of the also disestablished U.S. Space Command.

³We have issued a report on U.S. Strategic Command's efforts to establish and implement several missions that before 2003 had not previously been assigned to a combatant command. These missions include integrated missile defense; global strike; global command and control; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; DOD information operations; and combating weapons of mass destruction. See GAO, *Military Transformation: Additional Actions Needed by U.S. Strategic Command to Strengthen Implementation of Its Many Missions and New Organization*, [GAO-06-847](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 8, 2006).

⁴In keeping with the intended scope of the Warfighter Involvement Process, this report uses the term "warfighter" to refer to both the combatant commands and the military services unless otherwise indicated.

Warfighter Involvement Process has been to identify and prioritize the combatant commands' capability needs and provide the resulting Prioritized Capabilities List to the Missile Defense Agency.

Although the Missile Defense Agency has been given a significant amount of flexibility to develop ballistic missile defenses, including the ability to operate with considerable autonomy to change goals and plans, the Office of the Secretary of Defense retains executive oversight authority over the agency.⁵ For example, in establishing the Missile Defense Agency in 2002, the Secretary of Defense designated responsibility to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, as chairman of the Senior Executive Council,⁶ for providing the agency with policy, planning, and programming guidance; overseeing DOD missile defense activities; and approving recommendations for fielding ballistic missile defense assets. The Secretary of Defense also placed the Missile Defense Agency directly under the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and assigned responsibility to the Under Secretary's office for establishing a single development program for all work needed to develop integrated ballistic missile defenses. In 2004, the Deputy Secretary of Defense also assigned responsibility to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics for providing acquisition policy direction and overall management oversight of the Missile Defense Agency. In March 2007, the Deputy Secretary of Defense created a new Missile Defense Executive Board. Comprised of senior-level representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Strategic Command, the military departments, and other organizations, the Board is responsible for advising the Missile Defense Agency; the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; and for making recommendations to the Deputy Secretary of Defense for action.

To help Congress exercise oversight of ballistic missile defenses as these capabilities increasingly become operational, this report assesses the extent to which DOD has developed a process that identifies, prioritizes,

⁵Our prior work has shown that the flexibility given by the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the Missile Defense Agency has diluted transparency into the agency's acquisition processes, making it difficult to conduct oversight and hold the agency accountable. See GAO, *Defense Acquisitions: Progress Made in Fielding Missile Defense, but Program Is Short of Meeting Goals*, [GAO-08-448](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 14, 2008).

⁶The Senior Executive Council was created in July 2001 to advise the Secretary of Defense in the application of sound business practices in the military departments, DOD agencies, and other DOD organizations.

and addresses overall combatant command priorities as the Missile Defense Agency develops ballistic missile defense capabilities.⁷ To obtain information on DOD's process for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing overall combatant command priorities in developing ballistic missile defense capabilities, we obtained and reviewed U.S. Strategic Command, Missile Defense Agency, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Joint Staff guidance, directives, instructions, concepts, testimonies, and plans. We reviewed drafts of U.S. Strategic Command's instruction establishing the Warfighter Involvement Process,⁸ and obtained from U.S. Strategic Command the prioritized lists of the combatant commands' ballistic missile defense capability needs, which U.S. Strategic Command provided to the Missile Defense Agency in 2006 and 2007. We reviewed Missile Defense Agency guidance, plans, directives, briefings, and other documents that identify key steps, stakeholders, and factors that the Missile Defense Agency considers during its process for planning, designing, developing, and fielding ballistic missile defense capabilities. We also obtained and reviewed briefings describing a 2007 Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command study of how to more effectively involve the combatant commands in developing missile defense capabilities. We visited U.S. Strategic Command and met with officials to discuss the command's role as advocate for the warfighter for ballistic missile defense capabilities, and met with Missile Defense Agency officials to obtain their perspectives on how the agency has addressed combatant command priorities. We also obtained information from U.S. Central Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. Northern Command, and U.S. Pacific Command about their respective priorities for ballistic missile defenses. We also obtained documentation from and met with officials from the Joint Staff and from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to understand their perspectives. Further, we reviewed DOD directives, memorandums, and other guidance to the Missile Defense Agency that establishes DOD's overall approach for developing ballistic missile defense capabilities. We conducted this performance audit from August 2007 to May 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to

⁷This report complements other ongoing work, also at your request, to review DOD's plans for preparing to operate ballistic missile defense elements and support operations in the long term, including plans to transition these elements from the Missile Defense Agency to the services. We plan to issue a report on this other ongoing work later in 2008.

⁸U.S. Strategic Command issued its instruction SI 538-3, titled *Missile Defense Warfighter Involvement Process*, on June 25, 2008, after our draft report had been submitted to DOD for comment.

obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Our scope and methodology are described in more detail in appendix I.

Results in Brief

DOD has taken some steps to address the combatant commands' ballistic missile defense needs, but it has not yet established an effective process to identify, prioritize, and address these needs, or to provide a DOD-wide perspective on which priorities are the most important. U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005. Although the process is still evolving, it has helped the Missile Defense Agency address some of the combatant commands' needs. For example, in response to the combatant commands' first Prioritized Capabilities List, the Missile Defense Agency initiated new programs to develop sea-based defenses against short-range ballistic missiles. However, the Warfighter Involvement Process has not yet effectively conveyed either the commands' priorities to the Missile Defense Agency, or the Missile Defense Agency's planned adjustments back to the commands, for three interrelated reasons. First, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have not clarified their respective Warfighter Involvement Process roles and responsibilities by putting into place the approved and complete guidance needed to implement the process. Lacking such guidance, the combatant commands have not had an agreed-upon mechanism for influencing Missile Defense Agency investments. Second, in addition to lacking approved and complete guidance, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have not yet established effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command needs. As a result, the Missile Defense Agency has lacked clear information about how to best address the combatant commands' capability needs. Additionally, until recently the Missile Defense Agency has not clearly communicated how it has adjusted investments in response to the commands' needs. Without such information, the commands have not been able to provide the Missile Defense Agency feedback about how well the agency has addressed the commands' priorities in its funding plans. Third, senior civilian DOD leadership has not been involved in the Warfighter Involvement Process to adjudicate potential differences among the combatant commands' priorities as the leadership would under traditional DOD processes. Instead, under the Warfighter Involvement Process, U.S. Strategic Command has consolidated and submitted the commands' prioritized capability needs to the Missile Defense Agency without first vetting these

priorities though senior civilian DOD officials with departmentwide responsibilities for assessing risk and allocating resources. Lacking such participation, the Missile Defense Agency has not benefited from receiving a broader, departmentwide perspective on which of the commands' needs were the most significant. DOD has established a new board to advise the Deputy Secretary of Defense on ballistic missile defense priorities; however, it operates outside the Warfighter Involvement Process, and the extent to which this board will be involved in reviewing or adjudicating differences among the commands' priorities is unclear. The Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command have jointly studied ways to improve the Warfighter Involvement Process as this process evolves. However, unless and until U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency overcome these limitations, DOD remains at risk of not effectively providing the combatant commands with the missile defense capabilities they need. We are making recommendations to the Secretary of Defense to (1) improve DOD's process for identifying and addressing combatant command priorities; and (2) provide a DOD-wide perspective on the combatant commands' priorities, given the range of ballistic missile threats facing the United States. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD agreed with three of our recommendations intending to improve DOD's process. While DOD was commenting on our draft, U.S. Strategic Command issued guidance to define its roles and responsibilities in the Warfighter Involvement Process; this action partially implemented our recommendation that the command and the Missile Defense Agency complete and publish such guidance. As a result of U.S. Strategic Command's action, we modified our recommendation to direct U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency to regularly review and update their guidance as the Warfighter Involvement Process evolves. DOD also partially agreed with two other recommendations that are intended to improve DOD's process for identifying DOD-wide priorities for ballistic missile defense capabilities. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix III.

Background

The Missile Defense Agency has been charged with developing and deploying ballistic missile defenses against threats posed by adversaries from all geographic regions, at all ranges, and in all phases of flight. At least 25 countries have acquired ballistic missiles, including many countries that are also seeking or have acquired weapons of mass destruction that could be used on these missiles. In response, the Missile Defense Agency has been developing defenses against short-, medium-, intermediate-, and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles that could be targeted against U.S. forces abroad, U.S. friends and allies, and the

U.S. homeland.⁹ For example, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, Patriot Advanced Capability-3, and Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system are being developed primarily to provide an integrated capability to defend deployed U.S. forces, friends, and allies against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. The Missile Defense Agency is also developing sea-based defenses to destroy short-range missiles in the terminal phase of flight in order to defend deployed forces. In addition, the Missile Defense Agency is developing a Ground-based Midcourse Defense system designed to destroy intercontinental-range ballistic missiles targeted against the U.S. homeland, deployed U.S. forces, friends, and allies. Some ballistic missile defense systems are being designed to defend against more than one type of threat. For example, the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system is being designed not only to defend deployed U.S. forces, allies, and friends from short- and medium-range missiles, but also to help defend the U.S. homeland from longer range missiles. Table 1 summarizes the threat categories to be addressed by U.S. ballistic missile defenses.

Table 1: Ballistic Missile Threat Categories

| Ballistic missile category | Maximum range | Primary target of the threat |
|--|--|---|
| Short-range ballistic missile | Less than 600 kilometers (373 miles) | Deployed U.S. forces, friends, and allies |
| Medium-range ballistic missile | 600 to 1,300 kilometers (373 to 808 miles) | Deployed U.S. forces, friends, and allies |
| Intermediate-range ballistic missile | 1,300 to 5,500 kilometers (808 to 3,418 miles) | Deployed U.S. forces, friends, and allies |
| Intercontinental-range ballistic missile | Greater than 5,500 kilometers (3,418 miles) | U.S. homeland |

Source: GAO analysis of Missile Defense Agency information.

While the Missile Defense Agency is responsible for developing missile defenses, the unified combatant commands are the military organizations primarily responsible for deterring attacks and for employing forces should deterrence fail.¹⁰ The Unified Command Plan, which is signed by the President, establishes the combatant commanders’ missions and responsibilities and establishes their geographic areas of responsibility. The most recent version of the Unified Command Plan, which was published in 2006, identified five combatant commands—U.S. Central

⁹DOD defines the U.S. homeland to include the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. possessions and territories, and surrounding territorial waters and airspace.

¹⁰Title 10 of the United States Code defines a unified combatant command as a military command which has broad, continuing missions and which is composed of forces from two or more military departments.

Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Southern Command—with responsibilities covering specific geographic regions.¹¹ For example, U.S. Northern Command's area of responsibility includes all of North America and surrounding waters; for missile defenses, U.S. Northern Command would have primary responsibility for defending the continental United States from an intercontinental-range missile attack.

U.S. Strategic Command is a unified combatant command with responsibilities to integrate global missions and capabilities that cross the boundaries of the geographic commands. Initially assigned responsibility for nuclear deterrence, space, and computer network operations, the President, in January 2003, expanded the command's responsibilities to include several missions not previously assigned to a combatant command. These missions were: global strike planning and execution; planning, integrating, and coordinating global missile defense (including missile defense advocacy); oversight of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and global command and control; and DOD information operations. In January 2005, the Secretary of Defense also assigned the command responsibility for integrating and synchronizing DOD's efforts in combating weapons of mass destruction. DOD envisioned that U.S. Strategic Command's global operations would potentially add value to the geographic combatant commands as they carried out their responsibilities, and provide the President and Secretary of Defense with an expanded range of military options for responding to future threats.

U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005 to accomplish U.S. Strategic Command's responsibility to advocate for desired global missile defense characteristics and capabilities on behalf of all combatant commanders. Additionally, U.S. Strategic Command envisions using the process as a way for the military services and the Joint Staff to provide the Missile Defense Agency with guidance and advice on desired ballistic missile defense capabilities, operational approaches, and suitability and supportability features. The Warfighter Involvement Process is intended to provide a collaborative forum for the combatant commands, U.S. Strategic Command, Joint Staff, and military services to identify, assess, and

¹¹In 2007 the President ordered the creation of U.S. Africa Command as a new geographic combatant command, but the Unified Command Plan has not yet been updated to include the new command.

articulate capability needs to the Missile Defense Agency, analyze the risks associated with capability gaps and redundancies, and examine possible solutions and implementation timelines. Although the Warfighter Involvement Process involves a variety of organizations, U.S. Strategic Command is responsible for administering and managing the various analytical activities, software tools, focus groups, and review boards that make up the process.

GAO has previously reviewed DOD's plans to operate ballistic missile defense systems as certain systems have transitioned from a research and development emphasis to operational military capabilities.¹² For example, in 2006 we assessed DOD's preparations to operate and support ballistic missile defenses that are under continuous development. In 2007, we reported that DOD's long-term plans to develop boost and ascent phase missile defense systems did not consider operational perspectives on how many of these systems would be required for various deployment periods, or the challenges of establishing bases at potential deployment locations. Additionally, in response to a congressional mandate, we have annually reported since 2003 on the cost, schedule, testing, and performance progress that the Missile Defense Agency is making in developing ballistic missile defenses.¹³

¹²GAO, *Defense Management: Actions Needed to Improve Operational Planning and Visibility of Costs for Ballistic Missile Defense*, [GAO-06-473](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 31, 2006); *Missile Defense: Actions Needed to Improve Information for Supporting Future Key Decisions for Boost and Ascent Phase Elements*, [GAO-07-430](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 17, 2007).

¹³GAO, *Missile Defense: Actions Are Needed to Enhance Testing and Accountability*, [GAO-04-409](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 23, 2004); *Defense Acquisitions: Status of Ballistic Missile Defense Program in 2004*, [GAO-05-243](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 31, 2005); *Defense Acquisitions: Missile Defense Agency Fields Initial Capability but Falls Short of Original Goals*, [GAO-06-327](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 15, 2006); *Defense Acquisitions: Missile Defense Acquisition Strategy Generates Results but Delivers Less at a Higher Cost*, [GAO-07-387](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 15, 2007); and [GAO-08-448](#).

Warfighter Involvement Process Has Helped the Missile Defense Agency Address Some Capability Needs but the Process Faces Key Limitations

U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005 to identify and address the combatant commands' ballistic missile defense capability needs, but the process has yet to overcome key limitations to its effectiveness. Although the Warfighter Involvement Process is still evolving, it has helped the Missile Defense Agency address some of the combatant commands' needs. However, even as U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency move forward with the process, they have not finalized the implementation guidance needed to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities; have not yet established effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command needs; and have not involved senior civilian DOD leadership to adjudicate potential differences among the combatant commands' priorities and provide a departmentwide perspective about how to best allocate resources. As a result, DOD is at risk of not addressing the combatant commands' missile defense needs if improvements are not made that establish an effective and well documented process and provide a DOD-wide perspective when prioritizing these needs.

Warfighter Involvement Process Is Still Evolving but Has Helped the Missile Defense Agency Address Some Combatant Command Needs

Although the Warfighter Involvement Process was created in 2005 and is still evolving, the process has helped the Missile Defense Agency to address some combatant command ballistic missile defense capability needs. Since 2001, DOD has emphasized a capabilities-based development strategy to provide the combatant commands with the capabilities they require to deter and defeat a broad range of adversaries.¹⁴ By establishing the Missile Defense Agency in 2002, DOD intended to follow a more streamlined capabilities-based development strategy to rapidly develop and field ballistic missile defenses. Through the Warfighter Involvement Process, the agency has addressed some of the combatant commands' capability needs in developing ballistic missile defenses. However, because the Warfighter Involvement Process is still evolving, the combatant commands have not yet formally determined the extent to which the agency's plans are in line with the commands' needs.

Warfighter Involvement Process Is Still Evolving

The Warfighter Involvement Process has not fully evolved to effectively convey either the commands' priorities to the Missile Defense Agency or the Missile Defense Agency's planned adjustments back to the commands. When the Secretary of Defense created the Missile Defense Agency in

¹⁴Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Sept. 30, 2001).

2002, DOD lacked a process for the agency to consider the combatant commands' priorities as it developed ballistic missile defenses. Instead, the Missile Defense Agency focused on developing and deploying capabilities based on its own technology-driven assessment of what could be fielded quickly in order to meet the President's direction to quickly field a limited ballistic missile defense system by 2004. As a result, the Missile Defense Agency expedited its initial designs and development plans without formally considering the combatant commands' needs, according to the DOD Inspector General.¹⁵ Additionally, the agency identified long-term ballistic missile defense system capability goals before having a process in place to identify the commands' capability needs.

In emphasizing the rapid initial development of ballistic missile defense systems, the Missile Defense Agency anticipated that further investments could be needed to better meet the combatant commands' requirements. Under the Secretary of Defense's 2002 direction, the Missile Defense Agency's approach has been to deploy capabilities early, which may only partially meet warfighter needs, and then incrementally improve the deployed capabilities' effectiveness by inserting new technologies as they become available and as the threat warrants. To initiate this approach, the agency focused on further developing ballistic missile defenses that had been previously under development by the military services and subjected to DOD's traditional joint requirements determination process. Officials from U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Northern Command, the Missile Defense Agency, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense told us that the agency's approach resulted in the rapid deployment of operational missile defenses. A senior Missile Defense Agency official added that the Secretary of Defense reviewed and approved the agency's plans for developing this initial defensive capability. However, absent the combatant commands' inputs, U.S. Strategic Command concluded in January 2005 that taking this approach made it difficult not only for the Missile Defense Agency to associate its actions with the commands' requirements, but also for the combatant commands to evaluate the agency's progress. According to U.S. Strategic Command, the lack of a process also created the potential for inefficiencies and unnecessary redundancies in the Missile Defense Agency's investments, resulting in increased risk to the baseline costs and operational effectiveness of the ballistic missile defense systems under development.

¹⁵Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, *Acquisition: Capabilities Definition Process at the Missile Defense Agency*, D-2006-071 (Arlington, Va., April 2006).

Missile Defense Agency Has
Addressed Some Combatant
Command Needs following the
Warfighter Involvement
Process's Creation

U.S. Strategic Command recognized the need to formalize a process to carry out its missile defense advocacy responsibilities, even as the Missile Defense Agency was focused on developing and deploying capabilities quickly. Following U.S. Strategic Command's creation in 2002 and assignment of several new missions in January 2003, the command took a wide range of actions to implement and integrate these missions, such as developing various plans, concepts, and guidance; establishing procedures and processes; identifying personnel and funding resources; developing new relationships; building communication networks; and providing training, education, and exercises. Among these activities, U.S. Strategic Command took steps to establish its role as the combatant commands' advocate for missile defenses. For example, in its November 2003 *Strategic Concept for Global Ballistic Missile Defense*,¹⁶ U.S. Strategic Command outlined its initial concept for developing and advocating for desired ballistic missile defense capabilities. Subsequently, in late 2004 and early 2005, U.S. Strategic Command recognized the need for creating a more formalized process for identifying and addressing the warfighter's ballistic missile defense needs. Additionally, the command undertook several reorganizations, the latest occurring in late 2004 and early 2005, where it established a new functional component for integrated missile defense to bring focus and attention to the command's operational responsibilities.¹⁷

The Missile Defense Agency has addressed some combatant command needs since it and U.S. Strategic Command created the Warfighter Involvement Process in 2005. A key output of this newly established process is the Prioritized Capabilities List, which is intended to specify how the combatant commands collectively prioritize the full range of capabilities needed to perform ballistic missile defense missions. U.S. Strategic Command first provided the Prioritized Capabilities List to the Missile Defense Agency in 2006; a revised list was also provided in 2007. Combatant commands that provided inputs to the Prioritized Capabilities List include: U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Joint

¹⁶ A combatant commander's strategic concept contains the combatant commander's decision and planning guidance for accomplishing tasks and missions assigned to the combatant command, and provides the basis for more detailed plans to carry out these responsibilities.

¹⁷ A functional component command is one of the organizations that constitute a joint force, is normally comprised of forces from more than one military service, and may be established across the range of military operations to perform particular operational missions.

Forces Command,¹⁸ U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Strategic Command. Appendix II identifies short descriptions of the 27 capabilities listed in the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List.

Following the Warfighter Involvement Process's creation and preparation of the first Prioritized Capabilities List, the Missile Defense Agency adjusted some investment programs in response to the combatant commands' prioritized requirements. In particular:

- The Missile Defense Agency created new investment programs to develop sea-based defenses against short-range missiles in their terminal phase of flight. The first Prioritized Capabilities List identified the combatant commands' need for a sea-based terminal defense capability, but at that time the Missile Defense Agency was not investing resources to develop sea-based terminal defenses. After receiving the first Prioritized Capabilities List, the Missile Defense Agency included a program in its fiscal year 2008 budget proposal to modify and deploy up to 100 Navy Standard Missile-2 interceptors as a near-term option. Additionally, the Missile Defense Agency created a second program to develop more capable systems that would be available in the long term. The Missile Defense Agency's current plans for these programs include spending a total of \$124 million through fiscal year 2011 on the near-term option,¹⁹ and \$487 million through fiscal year 2013 to develop more advanced, long-term options.
- The Missile Defense Agency shifted funding to place greater emphasis on some existing investments because of requirements identified on the Prioritized Capabilities List. In particular, the Missile Defense Agency has been developing capabilities to sustain ballistic missile defense operations while simultaneously making the system available for testing, training, upgrades, and maintenance. Although the combatant commands had identified this capability need and the Missile Defense Agency funded this capability, it took on new urgency

¹⁸U.S. Joint Forces Command is a unified combatant command without specific geographic responsibilities. Its mission areas include joint concept development and experimentation, joint training, joint capabilities development, and joint force provider. Among its strategic goals, U.S. Joint Forces Command seeks to develop robust command and control capabilities that ensure decision makers receive information when they need it, allowing them to act faster than their adversaries.

¹⁹Additionally, according to a Navy official, the Navy has allocated about \$35 million to conduct an exercise and to begin modifying Standard Missile-2 interceptors in cooperation with the Missile Defense Agency to develop near-term sea-based terminal defenses.

when the ballistic missile defense system was taken out of test mode and put in an operational status for the first time in 2006. While the system was operational, it was not available to either the Missile Defense Agency for developmental activities and maintenance or to the combatant commands for training. To address this shortfall, the Missile Defense Agency increased resources to more quickly develop concurrent testing, training, and operations capabilities. According to the Missile Defense Agency, the agency increased funding for this effort from about \$0.5 million in fiscal year 2006 to \$6.9 million in fiscal year 2007.²⁰

- The Missile Defense Agency has responded to numerous combatant command requests to change systems that have already been fielded. Working closely with U.S. Strategic Command's functional component for integrated missile defense, the Missile Defense Agency has modified some systems' hardware and software to meet the combatant commands' capability needs. U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that the combatant commands typically identify the need for such changes as the result of exercises, training, or operational experience. Although officials we spoke with viewed the agency's responsiveness to these requests as positive, some observed that a more effective process for involving the warfighter earlier in developing systems could reduce the need to change these systems once they had been developed and fielded.

Although the Warfighter Involvement Process has not yet fully evolved, Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command officials believe the agency has generally been responsive to the combatant commands' capability needs. For example, a 2007 joint study by the Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command concluded that the agency was at least partially addressing all of the combatant commands' capability needs. Additionally, Missile Defense Agency officials told us that, based on the study's results and the agency's assessment of the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, the agency was making adjustments to its investment plans to help mitigate potential gaps between the commands' needs and

²⁰Beginning in fiscal year 2008, the agency combined its concurrent testing, training, and operations effort with a separate effort to develop a system of live, virtual, and constructive training environments to support both warfighter and developer needs. This separate effort had been appropriated about \$25 million in fiscal year 2007. As reflected in the agency's 2009 budget submission, the agency allocated approximately \$41.4 million to these combined activities in fiscal year 2008, and proposed to allocate \$37.7 million in fiscal year 2009.

the agency's programs. However, for approximately 3 years after it began making investments to develop and deploy systems, the Missile Defense Agency lacked the ability to ascertain the extent to which its efforts were aligned with the commands' needs. Moreover, as of May 2008, the combatant commands had not yet formally assessed and responded to the Missile Defense Agency's recently revised plans. As a result, the commands have not formally determined the extent to which the agency's plans are in line with the commands' needs.

Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command Have Not Yet Overcome Key Limitations

Although the Warfighter Involvement Process has helped address some of the commands' needs, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have yet to overcome key limitations as they move forward with the process. These interrelated limitations include a lack of clear and well documented roles and responsibilities; ineffective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command priorities; and the lack of senior civilian DOD participation in the process to adjudicate among the commands' priorities and assess departmentwide risk about how to best allocate resources.

U.S. Strategic Command and Missile Defense Agency Roles and Responsibilities Are Not Well Documented

U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have not yet clarified their respective roles and responsibilities by putting into place the approved and complete guidance needed to implement the process and to hold them accountable for achieving results. The Office of Management and Budget's guidance on establishing internal controls emphasizes that agencies should design management structures for programs to help ensure accountability for results.²¹ According to GAO's *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*,²² such management structures include clearly documented guidance, including policies, procedures, directives, instructions, and other documentation that establish roles and responsibilities needed to achieve an organization's mission and objectives. Additionally, our prior work on internal controls and management accountability also has emphasized that complete guidance should be approved, current, and binding on all appropriate stakeholders. Lacking approved and complete guidance, the combatant commands have not had a clear understanding of U.S. Strategic Command's and the Missile Defense Agency's roles and responsibilities,

²¹Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-123, *Management's Responsibility for Internal Control* (Washington, D.C., December 2004).

²²GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

and have lacked a mechanism to hold either organization accountable for effectively identifying, prioritizing, and addressing their needs.

U.S. Strategic Command has not yet put into place approved guidance formally establishing its roles and responsibilities under the Warfighter Involvement Process, although it has been developing a commandwide instruction to do so since 2005. In preparing the instruction, U.S. Strategic Command solicited comments from stakeholder organizations, including other combatant commands and the Joint Staff, in order to build consensus around key relationships that support the Warfighter Involvement Process. Some stakeholders raised key issues about U.S. Strategic Command's roles in the Warfighter Involvement Process. For example, U.S. Central Command officials commented that a draft version of U.S. Strategic Command's instruction conveyed too much responsibility to U.S. Strategic Command for speaking on behalf of the other commands when advocating for their capability needs. In response, U.S. Strategic Command modified its instruction to more clearly limit its responsibilities for prioritizing the different commands' needs. In addition to addressing stakeholder comments, U.S. Strategic Command changed the draft instruction to incorporate recommendations from a 2007 joint study by the Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command on how to improve the Warfighter Involvement Process. In February 2008, the command also updated the draft instruction to account for its newly assigned responsibility relating to DOD's efforts to integrate air and missile defenses across the department. U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that the command plans to approve and issue the instruction by mid-2008. However, the command's draft instruction recognizes that further clarifications and details for implementing the Warfighter Involvement Process are still needed, which may require additional revisions after the current draft is approved. Until U.S. Strategic Command has approved guidance in place, the combatant commands continue to lack a mechanism that holds U.S. Strategic Command accountable for its roles and responsibilities under the Warfighter Involvement Process.

The Missile Defense Agency also does not have finalized guidance in place detailing its responsibilities in the Warfighter Involvement Process. Lacking such guidance, officials from several combatant commands told us that the Missile Defense Agency has not provided them with enough insight into how it takes their needs into account. Although some of the Missile Defense Agency's Warfighter Involvement Process responsibilities are identified in U.S. Strategic Command's draft instruction, this instruction does not provide specific details about how the agency will carry them out. Additionally, the U.S. Strategic Command draft instruction

will not be binding on the Missile Defense Agency once it is completed. In commenting on U.S. Strategic Command's draft instruction, Joint Staff officials asked U.S. Strategic Command how the Missile Defense Agency would be held accountable for its Warfighter Involvement Process responsibilities. U.S. Strategic Command responded that its goal was for the Missile Defense Agency to either approve the U.S. Strategic Command instruction, or publish a complementary document stipulating its responsibilities. Missile Defense Agency officials told us in May 2008 that the agency had not yet taken either of these actions because U.S. Strategic Command's instruction was still incomplete.

Until recently, the Missile Defense Agency did not plan to prepare its own guidance for establishing its roles and responsibilities in the Warfighter Involvement Process. In March 2006, a senior Missile Defense Agency official stated to the DOD Inspector General that the agency did not plan to issue a new directive that complemented U.S. Strategic Command's instruction.²³ Instead, the official stated that the agency's *Integrated Program Policy* and *Systems Engineering Plan* would be used to document the agency's Warfighter Involvement Process responsibilities.²⁴ However, these documents provide top-level direction and descriptions of the agency's decision-making processes and lack specific details about how the agency would fulfill its Warfighter Involvement Process responsibilities. Moreover, the agency has not yet updated these documents to identify specific Warfighter Involvement Process roles and responsibilities. Additionally, a Missile Defense Agency official told us that, based on its experience during 2006 and 2007, the agency needed to prepare internal guidance to ensure that all of its project offices understood and could be held accountable for their responsibilities under the process. In May 2008, agency officials told us that the agency not only was planning to update some of this internal guidance, but also was beginning to prepare its own Warfighter Involvement Process guidance to

²³Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, D-2006-071.

²⁴The *Integrated Program Policy*, last updated in July 2005, provides top-level direction from the Director, Missile Defense Agency, that identifies and emphasizes the key decisions that the agency must make as it acquires ballistic missile defense capabilities, and the products that the agency must produce to assure these decisions are based on complete and timely information. The Missile Defense Agency's *Systems Engineering Plan*, last updated in June 2006, complements the *Integrated Program Policy* by providing a top-level description of the agency's capabilities-based system engineering process, and the technical management approach for developing and integrating different missile defense capabilities into a global Ballistic Missile Defense System.

**Warfighter Involvement
Process Has Not Resulted in
Effective Methodologies for
Identifying, Prioritizing, and
Addressing Capability Needs**

complement U.S. Strategic Command's instruction. Until the Missile Defense Agency completes this effort, the combatant commands will continue to lack both transparency into the Missile Defense Agency's process for addressing their needs, and the means to hold the agency accountable.

The Warfighter Involvement Process has not yet resulted in effective methodologies for the combatant commands to identify and prioritize their capability needs and for the Missile Defense Agency to address the combatant commands' capability needs. According to U.S. Strategic Command's draft instruction, the goals of the Warfighter Involvement Process include providing a unified means for the combatant commands to communicate desired capabilities to the Missile Defense Agency, and for the Missile Defense Agency to communicate its resultant acquisition plans back to the commands. The Prioritized Capabilities List is intended to achieve these goals through methodologies that clearly, completely, and accurately identify the commands' needed capabilities, and distinguish one priority from the next. Additionally, U.S. Strategic Command's draft Warfighter Involvement Process instruction indicates that an effective methodology for addressing the commands' needs would clearly associate the agency's investments with those needs. Lacking effective methodologies, the combatant commands have not communicated their capability needs in an understandable and useful way to the Missile Defense Agency, and the agency has not clearly communicated how the combatant commands' capability needs are being addressed in its development and investment decisions.

Some Combatant Commands' Needs Not Clearly Identified

Our work revealed several examples where the methodology used to develop the Prioritized Capabilities List did not effectively identify the specific capability needs of some of the combatant commands. In identifying the capability needs on the Prioritized Capabilities List, U.S. Strategic Command used a capabilities-based approach to prepare broad, generalized statements describing the full range of capabilities needed to operate a global ballistic missile defense system. As a result of this approach, several of the capabilities on the list encompass multiple functional areas, such as interceptors, sensors, and communications, which has made it difficult for the Missile Defense Agency to identify the specific capabilities that the commands require. Additionally, by focusing

on developing the capabilities that the combatant commands would need in the future,²⁵ U.S. Strategic Command officials told us the Prioritized Capabilities List has not provided an adequate format for the combatant commands to identify their needs for forces to meet ongoing operational requirements. Although U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that the 2007 list clearly identified the capabilities that were important to their command, officials from the three geographic combatant commands with whom we spoke told us that the list did not effectively represent their needs. For example:

- U.S. Northern Command officials told us that the capabilities did not adequately or clearly identify some of their more specific needs because the capabilities on the list encompass the specific needs of multiple commands, which could obscure the meaning and intent of the underlying needs of the individual commands.
- U.S. Pacific Command officials told us that the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List did not fully meet their command's needs because the list was not designed to identify the quantities of interceptors that the command needs to meet specific requirements for missile defense operations in the Pacific region,²⁶ given the potential ballistic missile threats posed to U.S. forces and allies in the region.
- U.S. Central Command officials told us that the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List provided the appropriate detail for systems that have yet to be developed. However, the officials also told us that U.S. Central Command's primary need is to be sure that the command has access to sufficient short-range missile defense systems for operations in its region.²⁷ They added that the Prioritized Capabilities List has not been an effective tool for advocating for these needs because it is focused, instead, on future capability requirements.

U.S. Strategic Command officials stated that they used a capabilities-based approach to identify and prioritize capability needs because this approach

²⁵The 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List sought to identify and prioritize capabilities needed in 2015.

²⁶U.S. Pacific Command's geographic area of responsibility includes Northeast, South, and Southeast Asia, as well as Oceania.

²⁷U.S. Central Command's geographic area of responsibility includes the Middle East, eastern Africa, and several of the former Soviet republics.

is consistent with DOD's traditional joint requirements determination process used by the combatant commands in non-missile-defense areas, which initially identifies requirements in broad terms.²⁸ U.S. Strategic Command stated that this approach allowed it to identify and condense over 100 tasks required to plan and execute ballistic missile defense missions into the 27 capabilities on the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List. U.S. Strategic Command officials added that this approach resulted in a list of manageable length and level of detail needed to provide the Missile Defense Agency with insight into the commands' needs. The officials further stated that the list was not designed to identify the commands' short-term operational requirements, adding that U.S. Strategic Command planned to put into place a Warfighter Involvement Process function to identify and advocate for the commands' operational force requirements. However, the U.S. Strategic Command and Missile Defense Agency officials agreed that the lists prepared to date have not provided enough specific detail to inform the Missile Defense Agency about how to best address the commands' needs when developing new capabilities. Until U.S. Strategic Command develops a methodology to more clearly identify the commands' capability needs, the Prioritized Capabilities List's effectiveness as a guide for the Missile Defense Agency for investing resources will continue to be limited.

Combatant Commands' Needs Not Consistently Prioritized

In addition to not effectively identifying some of the combatant commands' capability needs, the Warfighter Involvement Process also has not resulted in a consistent methodology for prioritizing these needs. In preparing the 2006 Prioritized Capabilities List, the combatant commands grouped the capabilities by the time frames in which they will be

²⁸The traditional DOD requirements development process is the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System. The purpose of this system is to support the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Joint Requirement Oversight Council in advising the Secretary of Defense in identifying, assessing, and prioritizing joint military capability needs. Capabilities represent warfighting needs that are studied as part of the system's capabilities-based assessment process. The process identifies the operational tasks, conditions, and standards needed to achieve military objectives (Functional Area Analysis); assesses the ability of current and planned systems to deliver the capabilities and tasks identified in the Functional Area Analysis in order to produce a list of capability gaps and identify redundancies (Functional Needs Analysis); and identifies joint approaches to fill the identified capability gaps (Functional Solution Analysis).

needed—either near-, mid-, or far-term.²⁹ In contrast, for preparing the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, U.S. Strategic Command asked the combatant commands to evaluate each capability's relative importance to (1) the command's ballistic missile defense mission, weighted at 60 percent; (2) the command's other missions, weighted at 30 percent; and (3) other joint capability areas, weighted at 10 percent. For each capability, the combatant commands were told to assign a rating of 1 (lowest importance) to 5 (highest importance) for each factor, multiply the rating by the appropriate weight, and add the three ratings up to develop a score for each capability. However, the individual combatant commands did not consistently apply this methodology:

- Some combatant commands took additional factors into account when prioritizing their individual capability needs. U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that each of the combatant commands was best positioned to determine for itself how to use the criteria for prioritizing the capabilities on the list. However, in the analysis accompanying the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, U.S. Strategic Command recognized as a limitation that the commands may have considered the current performance of a system or other criteria when prioritizing their needs. Missile Defense Agency officials told us that some combatant commands appeared to follow U.S. Strategic Command's direction and prioritize the capabilities based on their overall importance to their current responsibilities, while other commands appeared to prioritize their needs based on what capabilities they were lacking. As a result, the Missile Defense Agency officials told us that the Missile Defense Agency lacked clarity on what the commands were trying to communicate in the Prioritized Capabilities List.
- The combatant commands also did not consistently rank their capability needs. For example, U.S. Northern Command officials told us that they believed it was important to clearly distinguish among priorities by not assigning the same score to more than one capability, whereas U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that duplicate scores indicated that some capabilities were equally important to the command. Additionally, U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that U.S. Strategic Command did not initially provide guidance on whether duplicate scores were acceptable; however, they stated that

²⁹When the first Prioritized Capabilities List was provided to the Missile Defense Agency in 2006, it defined near-term needs as those that were required immediately, mid-term needs as those required in the fiscal year 2008–2010 time frame, and far-term needs as those required in fiscal year 2012 or beyond.

U.S. Strategic Command officials later told them that such results were valid. In addition to U.S. Joint Forces Command, which assigned the second-highest score to four capabilities, U.S. Central Command and U.S. Pacific Command both assigned the highest score to four capabilities, and U.S. European Command assigned the second-highest score to three capabilities. However, Missile Defense Agency officials told us that it would be more useful to the agency if the combatant commands more clearly distinguished among their prioritized needs by not assigning duplicate scores.

Missile Defense Agency's Response to the Prioritized Capabilities List Not Formally Assessed

U.S. Strategic Command has not formally assessed the Missile Defense Agency's responses to the 2006 and 2007 Prioritized Capabilities Lists to determine whether the agency has developed an effective methodology for addressing the combatant commands' needs. Such an analysis of the Missile Defense Agency's response is envisioned in U.S. Strategic Command's draft Warfighter Involvement Process instruction. However, U.S. Strategic Command did not prepare a formal response to the agency's first Achievable Capabilities List,³⁰ which the Missile Defense Agency provided to the combatant commands in 2006. U.S. Strategic Command and Missile Defense Agency officials stated that the 2006 Achievable Capabilities List was ineffective because the agency did not analyze its detailed investment programs to determine the extent to which its programs were well aligned with the commands' priorities. U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that clear, direct linkages between the Prioritized Capabilities List and the Missile Defense Agency's programs were difficult to establish because the capabilities on the Prioritized Capabilities List are at a broad, generalized level and the Missile Defense Agency's program of record is at a system-specific level. As a result, the Missile Defense Agency's response to the first Prioritized Capabilities List did not provide U.S. Strategic Command with funding or budget information needed to prepare a formal response to the 2006 Achievable Capabilities List.

³⁰ According to the February 29, 2008, draft U.S. Strategic Command instruction on the Warfighter Involvement Process, the Achievable Capabilities List is an appraisal of the commands' capability needs against the Missile Defense Agency's planned investments where the Missile Defense Agency describes the achievable time frames for delivering each of the warfighters' desired capabilities.

The Missile Defense Agency has prepared a more complete and detailed response to the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, but U.S. Strategic Command has not yet formally analyzed the agency's response. Missile Defense Agency officials told us that compared to the 2006 Achievable Capabilities List, the 2007 Achievable Capabilities List provides better information about how the agency has addressed the commands' needs. Unlike the previous list, the 2007 Achievable Capabilities List provides more information, including a capability gap analysis and a detailed budget analysis that links each of the commands' 27 capability needs to the agency's investment programs. According to the Missile Defense Agency, at least four combatant commands have provided favorable feedback to the Missile Defense Agency about its 2007 response. However, the combatant commands have not yet formally assessed whether the agency's methodology for addressing their needs is effective. As envisioned by the U.S. Strategic Command's Warfighter Involvement Process draft instruction, U.S. Strategic Command would analyze and reply to the agency's Achievable Capabilities List by preparing a Capability Assessment Report. U.S. Strategic Command stated that this report is to appraise the Missile Defense Agency's funding plans, assess whether the agency's development trends are expected to provide effective capabilities, and facilitate further interaction with the agency about potential changes to the Missile Defense Agency's investments. Having received the agency's most recent Achievable Capabilities List in April 2008, U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that they plan to complete this assessment and provide the Capability Assessment Report to the Missile Defense Agency by mid-August 2008. However, the officials told us that they did not expect that the Missile Defense Agency would have time to make significant adjustments to its fiscal year 2010 budget proposal after receiving the Capability Assessment Report. Until U.S. Strategic Command prepares this assessment, the agency will lack the commands' formal feedback on how well it is addressing their needs and may miss opportunities to make adjustments to its plans and future budgets.

U.S. Strategic Command and Missile Defense Agency Are Taking Steps to Improve Warfighter Involvement Process

U.S. Strategic Command and Missile Defense Agency officials told us that the Warfighter Involvement Process has provided the Missile Defense Agency with important information about the combatant commands' needed capabilities, and that they are taking steps to improve their respective inputs to the process. U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List highlighted an overall preference among the commands for the Missile Defense Agency to further improve

existing capabilities, rather than develop new types of ballistic missile defenses. Missile Defense Agency officials added that the Warfighter Involvement Process has increased the agency's interactions with the combatant commands, which has provided the agency a broader perspective of the combatant commands' operational responsibilities, including insight into their operational needs for integrated planning, communications, and consequence management. Further, U.S. Strategic Command has sought new methodologies to enhance the ability to identify and prioritize the commands' capability needs as the process has evolved. Moving forward, U.S. Strategic Command plans to improve the Prioritized Capabilities List by distinguishing between overall, long-term capability needs and shorter-term development goals. Command officials also told us that they intend to improve the list by clarifying the capability statements to provide better guidance to the Missile Defense Agency. According to the officials, this improved list would be prepared in time for the Missile Defense Agency to consider when it prepares its 2012 budget proposal. However, as of May 2008, U.S. Strategic Command had only begun the process of determining the methodologies for identifying and prioritizing the commands' capability needs. Until U.S. Strategic Command prepares effective and consistent methodologies for identifying and prioritizing these capabilities, the Prioritized Capabilities List will continue to be of limited use to the Missile Defense Agency. Moreover, Missile Defense Agency officials indicated that they may need to make further improvements to the agency's approach for addressing the commands' needs. Unless the Missile Defense Agency has developed an effective methodology for addressing their needs, the commands' ability to provide a detailed, formal assessment of the agency's plans will be limited.

**Warfighter Involvement
Process Lacked Senior Civilian
DOD Leadership Involvement**

Unlike DOD's traditional process for prioritizing combatant command capability needs when DOD prepares its funding plans, the Warfighter Involvement Process has lacked the involvement of senior civilian DOD officials with a departmentwide perspective to adjudicate potential differences among the combatant commands' priorities. Under DOD's traditional process, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, evaluates the combatant commands' individual and collective requirements, and advises the Secretary of Defense on the extent to which DOD investment plans are addressing these requirements. In contrast, the Warfighter Involvement Process is not structured to involve senior civilian DOD leadership to provide their perspective on how to assess risk and allocate resources for missile defenses and other DOD needs. Instead, U.S. Strategic Command consolidated each command's capability needs into an overall prioritized list, and then provided the list directly to the Missile Defense Agency. Lacking the involvement of senior civilian DOD officials in reviewing the

commands' priorities, the Missile Defense Agency has not benefited from receiving a broader, departmentwide perspective on which of the commands' needs were the most significant.

Under traditional DOD requirements processes, each combatant command is responsible for identifying and seeking the specific military capabilities that it needs to implement its own mission. Moreover, the commands' capability needs differ and depend on their individual mission responsibilities. For example, U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Central Command's missions and geographic responsibilities primarily call for ballistic missile defenses that can address short- and medium-range missile threats to deployed forces and to U.S. friends and allies. U.S. Central Command officials added that they also require sea-based missile defense capabilities to provide greater operational flexibility in a politically volatile region. U.S. Northern Command's mission is to defend the U.S. homeland, and its primary operational focus for ballistic missile defense is on intercontinental threats. As the combatant command responsible for developing robust, joint command and control capabilities and interoperable systems, U.S. Joint Forces Command has emphasized the need to integrate ballistic missile defense capabilities with air and cruise missile defenses. U.S. Strategic Command, which is responsible for planning, integrating, and coordinating global missile defense operations, has worldwide responsibilities that include working with all of the geographic commands on an equal basis to defend their respective regions.

Given these varied mission needs, some combatant command officials told us that they were not satisfied with U.S. Strategic Command's approach for preparing the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List. To prepare the list, U.S. Strategic Command determined an overall score for each of the 27 capabilities on the list by adding together the scores that the commands had assigned to each individual capability. U.S. Strategic Command then listed the capabilities from highest to lowest aggregate score to consolidate the commands' needs into a single, overall prioritized list. U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that this was a reasonable approach to follow for consolidating the commands' priorities because it equitably represented each command's needs. However, other combatant command officials told us that they were dissatisfied with this approach. For example, U.S. Central Command officials told us this approach had limited utility because it did not consider or distinguish among the different commands' mission responsibilities. U.S. Pacific Command officials similarly told us that compiling a single list should not be based only on the sum of each

capability's score, but should also consider each command's specific military responsibilities relative to each other. U.S. Northern Command officials told us that the combatant commands' varied mission requirements made it difficult to consolidate the commands' capability needs in a meaningful way without judging which missile defense missions were the most pressing.

Although they prefer to have their commands' individual mission responsibilities taken into account when preparing the Prioritized Capabilities List, some combatant command officials told us that the Warfighter Involvement Process was not well structured to adjudicate potential differences among their needs. For example, in comments on a draft of U.S. Strategic Command's Warfighter Involvement Process instruction, U.S. Central Command stated the Unified Command Plan did not implicitly or explicitly convey to U.S. Strategic Command the responsibility to assess the relative importance of the other commands' capability needs. U.S. Northern Command officials told us that although U.S. Strategic Command is best positioned among the combatant commands to advocate for warfighter-desired ballistic missile defense capabilities, they were unsure whether the Unified Command Plan gave U.S. Strategic Command the responsibility, as the Warfighter Involvement Process administrator, to determine which of the other commands' needs were the most important. U.S. Pacific Command officials also told us that U.S. Strategic Command may lack the proper perspective to assess and evaluate the other commands' mission areas when determining overall priorities. The U.S. Pacific Command officials added that senior civilian DOD officials could apply a broader perspective to help specify whether the prioritized list should emphasize one command's mission needs over another's. Although U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that U.S. Strategic Command has the appropriate authorities to develop a Prioritized Capabilities List on behalf of the other commands, they stated that U.S. Strategic Command would have difficulty reaching consensus among the combatant commands about which of their mission needs were the most important, which could make the process of preparing a final list unnecessarily complicated and difficult. U.S. Strategic Command officials also stated that adjudicating the priorities of the other commands is not within the scope of the Warfighter Involvement Process; rather, the command officials told us that they intended use the Prioritized Capabilities List to identify the combatant commands' collective priorities for developing a globally integrated ballistic missile defense system. U.S. Strategic Command further stated that senior DOD leadership should be responsible for instructing the Missile Defense Agency about how to best address these priorities.

U.S. Strategic Command officials stated that, even as they did not adjudicate the other commands' mission needs in preparing the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, they did not involve senior civilian DOD authorities to do so. Rather, U.S. Strategic Command sought the other combatant commands' approval of the list, and then provided the list to the Missile Defense Agency without first seeking a review outside the Warfighter Involvement Process by DOD officials with responsibilities for assessing risk and allocating resources. In particular, U.S. Strategic Command convened a meeting of 1-star and 2-star general and flag officers from the combatant commands to review the list and resolve any disagreements before it was finalized. U.S. Strategic Command also circulated drafts of the list for the commands' senior leadership to review, and made changes to the list in response to critical comments from one of the commands. As a result, while the commanders of the combatant commands approved the list before U.S. Strategic Command sent it to the Missile Defense Agency, the list did not receive a higher-level review to determine which of their priorities was most important.

U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that they recognized that consolidating the individual commands' needs into an overall set of priorities would result in some commands having their priorities ranked higher than those of other commands. However, U.S. Strategic Command officials added that they were responsive to the need to make the individual commands' priorities transparent. For example, the analysis accompanying the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List documented how each command individually ranked the 27 capabilities on the list, so that the Missile Defense Agency could gain insight into what the individual commands needed. Additionally, the analysis accompanying the 2007 list highlighted that U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Pacific Command gave higher scores for capabilities needed to defend deployed forces, U.S. allies, and friends, while U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Northern Command prioritized higher those capabilities needed to defend the U.S. homeland. Further, U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Joint Forces Command officials told us that the overall list provided a fair perspective on the commands' overall priorities because the capabilities ranked highest on the consolidated list were highly ranked by multiple commands. However, without involving senior DOD officials to provide a departmentwide review of these overall priorities, assess the commands' varied mission responsibilities, and provide their perspective on which priorities were the most significant, the consolidated list could obscure the importance of a key national defense priority if that need was ranked highly by only one command.

In contrast to preparing the Prioritized Capabilities List, other aspects of U.S. Strategic Command's ballistic missile defense responsibilities involve senior DOD officials for reviewing and adjudicating decisions that affect the other combatant commands. For example, under U.S. Strategic Command's 2003 concept for planning, integrating, and coordinating global ballistic missile defense forces during a crisis, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be responsible for considering a U.S. Strategic Command recommendation to reallocate ballistic missile defense forces from one combatant command's region to another's. Although U.S. Strategic Command's concept states that "in most cases, U.S. Strategic Command's recommendations will be understood and accepted by the other combatant commands," the affected commands could present alternative recommendations to the Secretary of Defense if they disagreed with U.S. Strategic Command's proposal. By providing for senior-level involvement during planning, U.S. Strategic Command ensures that the decision to reallocate forces from one region to another is made based on a full, DOD-wide perspective on how to best meet national security needs.

DOD is taking steps to improve the oversight of ballistic missile defense developments, but so far these steps have not included plans to involve senior civilian DOD officials to adjudicate the combatant commands' priorities. The Missile Defense Executive Board was chartered in March 2007 to review and make recommendations on the Missile Defense Agency's comprehensive acquisition strategy to the Deputy Secretary of Defense. U.S. Northern Command officials stated to us that the Missile Defense Executive Board could play a valuable role by reviewing the Prioritized Capabilities List before it was provided to the Missile Defense Agency. Similarly, U.S. Strategic Command officials told us that the Missile Defense Executive Board could provide the combatant commands with a venue outside the Warfighter Involvement Process for reviewing and adjudicating their differing mission needs after the Prioritized Capabilities List is completed, but before the list is provided to the Missile Defense Agency. The U.S. Strategic Command officials added that the board could provide a perspective that U.S. Strategic Command lacked on the cost, risk, and benefits of allocating resources to develop specific priorities. Since late 2007 the board has been considering new processes to improve the management of DOD resources to develop and operate ballistic missile defenses. Chaired by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, the Board's membership includes senior-level representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Strategic Command, and other organizations. As a result, the board is expected to provide DOD with a means to exercise broader oversight of the Missile Defense Agency than its predecessor

organizations.³¹ However, U.S. Strategic Command and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials told us that the board's current focus is to align the services' and Missile Defense Agency's resource plans to support ballistic missile defense operations, rather than assess the relative importance of the combatant commands' ballistic missile defense mission responsibilities and corresponding capability needs. Unless senior civilian DOD officials get involved in adjudicating the commands' overall priorities before DOD makes resource decisions, the Missile Defense Agency will lack a departmentwide perspective on how to best allocate resources to meet the broad array of missile threats that confront U.S. national security.

Conclusions

The Warfighter Involvement Process continues to evolve and mature as U.S. Strategic Command works with the other combatant commands to identify priorities and communicate them to the Missile Defense Agency. Because the process is distinct from DOD's traditional process, U.S. Strategic Command has had to build consensus around new roles, responsibilities, and authorities needed to make the combatant commands' capability needs known to the Missile Defense Agency. Even without a mature and effective Warfighter Involvement Process in place, the Missile Defense Agency has adjusted some of its investments to better meet the combatant commands' capability needs. However, U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency have yet to overcome key limitations that complicate both U.S. Strategic Command's efforts to advocate on behalf of the other commands, and the Missile Defense Agency's ability to address their needs. Although U.S. Strategic Command has been drafting implementation guidance since 2005, neither the command nor the Missile Defense Agency has finalized such guidance, which is needed to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the Prioritized Capabilities List has not been a clear and effective guide for the Missile Defense Agency to follow when making investment decisions. Moreover, the Missile Defense Agency has only recently analyzed the combatant commands' needs and linked them to its investment programs; until the combatant commands formally assess and respond to the agency's analysis, the extent to which the agency has effectively addressed the commands' needs will remain unclear. Finally,

³¹When the Missile Defense Support Group was chartered in 2002, it was to provide constructive advice to the Director, Missile Defense Agency. However, the Director was not required to follow the advice of the group. According to a DOD official, although the support group met many times initially, it did not meet after June 2005. This led, in 2007, to the formation of the Missile Defense Executive Board. See [GAO-08-448](#), p. 36.

the Warfighter Involvement Process faces challenges in determining the relative importance of the combatant commands' varied ballistic missile defense responsibilities. Unless these priorities are vetted by senior civilian DOD officials with departmentwide responsibilities for assessing risk and allocating resources, the Missile Defense Agency will be left to act on the commands' priorities without the benefit of a DOD-wide perspective on the best approach to counter the short-, medium-, intermediate-, and intercontinental-range missile threats facing the United States.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve DOD's process for identifying and addressing combatant command priorities for ballistic missile defense capabilities, we recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the Director, Missile Defense Agency, to take the following two actions:

1. complete and publish the implementation guidance needed to clearly define each organization's roles and responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses, and review and update such guidance, as needed, as DOD's process continues to evolve; and
2. establish effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses.

Further, to provide the Missile Defense Agency with feedback as to how well it has addressed the combatant commands' priorities in preparing future funding plans, we recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the other combatant commands, to prepare an assessment of the Missile Defense Agency's funding plans compared to the commands' priorities, and provide the assessment to the Director, Missile Defense Agency.

To provide a DOD-wide perspective on the combatant commands' priorities, given their views on the range of ballistic missile threats facing the United States, we recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Missile Defense Executive Board to review each Prioritized Capabilities List upon its release, including the individual commands' priorities, and recommend to the Deputy Secretary of Defense an overall DOD-wide list of prioritized capabilities. We further recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Deputy Secretary of Defense to provide guidance to the

Director, Missile Defense Agency, on program priorities taking into account the Missile Defense Executive Board's recommendation.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD agreed with three recommendations and partially agreed with two recommendations. DOD also provided technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix III.

DOD agreed with our recommendation that U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency complete and publish implementation guidance needed to clearly define each organization's roles and responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses. In its comments, DOD stated that the department has initiated the implementing guidance to define organizational roles and responsibilities. Specifically, DOD commented that on June 25, 2008, U.S. Strategic Command approved an instruction, titled *Missile Defense Warfighter Involvement Process*, that defines and establishes the process and outlines the command's roles and responsibilities to influence the development, coordination, administration, and advocacy of global missile defense capabilities. We believe this is a positive step. However, the issued instruction indicates that the command anticipates the need for future revisions to the instruction as the process continues to evolve and as DOD undertakes efforts to integrate air and missile defenses across the department. Since U.S. Strategic Command issued the instruction when our draft report was with DOD for comment, we modified the recommendation to direct U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency to regularly review and update their guidance as the process evolves. DOD also commented that the Missile Defense Agency is defining its own guidance for its organizational roles and responsibilities to complement U.S. Strategic Command's guidance; however, DOD's comments did not provide us with a schedule or time frame for the completion of this effort. Until the Missile Defense Agency's guidance is completed, the combatant commands will continue to lack transparency into the Missile Defense Agency's process for addressing their needs and the means to hold the agency accountable.

DOD also agreed with our recommendation that U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency establish effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing the combatant commands' capability needs for ballistic missile defenses. In its comments, DOD stated that U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency are

implementing effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs. Yet DOD also acknowledged that these methodologies continue to be refined. Our report recognizes that U.S. Strategic Command and the Missile Defense Agency are taking steps to improve the methodologies used in the Warfighter Involvement Process; however, we identified limitations with the current methodologies used to identify and prioritize the combatant commands' capability needs. For example, we found that the Prioritized Capabilities List did not fully identify some of the combatant commands' specific needs. We also determined that the combatant commands did not consistently apply criteria for prioritizing their capability needs, and also did not clearly distinguish among their priorities. As U.S. Strategic Command works to refine the methodologies for identifying and prioritizing capabilities, it will need to overcome these challenges.

DOD agreed with our recommendation that U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the other combatant commands, prepare an assessment of the Missile Defense Agency's funding plans compared to the commands' priorities and provide feedback to the Missile Defense Agency. In its comments, DOD stated that U.S. Strategic Command is preparing a Capabilities Assessment Report that examines the effectiveness and programmatic aspects of the ballistic missile defense system compared to the commands' priorities, which it will present to the Missile Defense Agency in the fall of 2008. DOD also commented that U.S. Strategic Command has prepared a "Quick Look" of this report, which it provided to the Missile Defense Agency in June 2008. We encourage U.S. Strategic Command to provide the final assessment to the Missile Defense Agency as soon as possible so that the agency can consider the results of the assessment in developing its future funding plans.

DOD partially agreed with both of our recommendations intended to provide the Missile Defense Agency with a DOD-wide perspective on the combatant commands' priorities. First, DOD partially agreed with our recommendation to direct the Missile Defense Executive Board to review each Prioritized Capabilities List upon its release, including the individual commands' priorities, and recommend to the Deputy Secretary of Defense an overall DOD-wide list of prioritized capabilities. Second, DOD partially agreed with our recommendation to direct the Deputy Secretary of Defense to provide guidance to the Missile Defense Agency on program priorities based on the Missile Defense Executive Board's recommendation. However, it is not clear how DOD intends to implement these recommendations. In its comments, DOD stated that the Missile Defense Executive Board reviews the Prioritized Capability List prepared

by U.S. Strategic Command, but added that a DOD-wide list of prioritized capabilities is not needed because the U.S. Strategic Command-prepared list provides the agency with a single list of prioritized needs. DOD also commented that it disagreed with the need for the Deputy Secretary of Defense to provide additional guidance to the Missile Defense Agency. We believe that additional actions to implement both recommendations are needed. First, officials from U.S. Strategic Command and other combatant commands told us during our review that the Warfighter Involvement Process was not well structured to consider the combatant commands' individual mission responsibilities when preparing a consolidated list of the commands' priorities. As a result, U.S. Strategic Command's list could obscure the importance of a key ballistic missile defense capability if that capability was ranked high by only one of the combatant commands. Comprised of senior-level representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Strategic Command, the military departments, and other organizations, the Missile Defense Executive Board could provide a broader, defensewide perspective factoring in the cost, risk, and benefits of supporting one command's priorities over another's. Absent a DOD-wide list of prioritized capabilities, the Missile Defense Agency will continue to lack the benefit of a departmentwide perspective on which of the combatant commands' priorities are the most significant. Additionally, we continue to believe that the Deputy Secretary of Defense should provide the Missile Defense Agency with guidance on program priorities based on a DOD-wide list of prioritized capabilities. In its comments, DOD stated that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, as chairman of the Missile Defense Executive Board, has established a process for issuing Acquisition Decision Memorandums to the Director, Missile Defense Agency. Although the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics is responsible for overseeing the Missile Defense Agency, the Deputy Secretary of Defense has been responsible for providing policy, planning, and programming guidance to the Missile Defense Agency since the agency's establishment in 2002. Further, as discussed in our report, the Missile Defense Executive Board is responsible for making recommendations to the Deputy Secretary of Defense on the Missile Defense Agency's comprehensive acquisition strategy.

We are sending electronic copies of this report to interested congressional committees; the Secretary of Defense; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director, Missile Defense Agency; and the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command. We will also make electronic copies available to others on

request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at 404-679-1816 or pendletonj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John H. Pendleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John H. Pendleton
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

During this review, we focused on assessing the Department of Defense's (DOD) process for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing overall combatant command priorities in developing ballistic missile defense capabilities. To do so, we obtained and reviewed key documentation from U.S. Strategic Command relevant to how the combatant commands identify and prioritize their ballistic missile defense capability needs. The U.S. Strategic Command documentation that we obtained included the July 4, 2007, October 31, 2007, and February 29, 2008, versions of a draft U.S. Strategic Command instruction establishing the Warfighter Involvement Process, U.S. Strategic Command's November 2003 *Strategic Concept for Global Ballistic Missile Defense*, and the command's November 2007 *Report to Congress on USSTRATCOM Warfighter Involvement Process*. We also obtained and reviewed U.S. Strategic Command briefings on the evolution of the Warfighter Involvement Process, current features of the process, and efforts to improve the process. Additionally, we obtained and reviewed the 2006 and 2007 Prioritized Capabilities Lists to understand the commands' prioritized capability needs and U.S. Strategic Command's approach for preparing these lists. To further our knowledge, we obtained and reviewed minutes of Warfighter Involvement Process management and focus group meetings, including the minutes of the meeting where the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List was approved before it was sent to the Missile Defense Agency. In addition to U.S. Strategic Command documentation, we also obtained written comments provided by U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Northern Command, and U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Strategic Command on the draft Warfighter Involvement Process instruction. We also obtained combatant command comments provided to U.S. Strategic Command to help develop the Prioritized Capabilities Lists. We also reviewed testimonies from the commanders of U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Strategic Command to help us better understand each command's specific ballistic missile defense capability needs. In order to gain the Missile Defense Agency's perspective on how it is addressing combatant command priorities, we reviewed Missile Defense Agency guidance, plans, directives, briefings, and other documentation that identifies key steps, stakeholders, and factors that the Missile Defense Agency considers during its process for planning, designing, developing, and fielding ballistic missile defense capabilities. For example, we reviewed the Missile Defense Agency's *Integrated Program Policy*, dated July 2005, *Ballistic Missile Defense Integrated Program Policy Implementation Guide*, dated June 2005, and *System Engineering Plan*, dated July 2006, in order to understand the extent to which the agency has documented how it addresses combatant command

priorities in its decision making. We also reviewed the Missile Defense Agency's 2006 Achievable Capabilities List, which was its response to the 2006 Prioritized Capabilities List, and examined Missile Defense Agency briefings, budget documents, and testimonies by the Director, Missile Defense Agency. We also obtained and reviewed briefings describing a 2007 Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Strategic Command study of how to make the Warfighter Involvement Process more effective, and reviewed the 2007 Achievable Capabilities List to identify changes in the Missile Defense Agency's approach for addressing combatant command priorities. Additionally, we obtained and reviewed drafts of the agency's directive and instruction for implementing the Warfighter Involvement Process. We also reviewed public law, presidential guidance, and DOD directives, memorandums, briefings, and other documentation that establishes DOD's overall approach to developing missile defense capabilities. Such documentation included chapters 5 and 6 of Title 10 of the United States Code; *National Security Presidential Directive 23* dated December 16, 2002; the Unified Command Plan dated May 2006; DOD Directive 5134.9, *Subject: Missile Defense Agency*, dated October 9, 2004; and other Secretary of Defense guidance outlining the Missile Defense Agency's roles and responsibilities. We also obtained and reviewed the Missile Defense Executive Board's charter, as well as agendas and minutes from board meetings held in 2007.

In conducting our work, we contacted officials at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Missile Defense Agency, U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, the military services, and other organizations. Table 2 provides information on the organizations and offices contacted during our review. We conducted this performance audit from August 2007 to May 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Table 2: Organizations and Offices Contacted during Our Review

Department of Defense

- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics
 - Office of the Director, Program Analysis and Evaluation
- Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Staff Directorate
 - Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment–Joint Theater Air and Missile Defense Office
- Office of the Department of Defense Inspector General

U.S. Strategic Command

- Capabilities and Resource Integration Directorate
- U.S. Strategic Command Functional and Service Components
 - Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense
 - U.S. Air Force Space Command
 - U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command

Missile Defense Agency

- Office of the Executive Director
- Office of the Deputy for Engineering
- Office of the Deputy for Integration and Fielding
- Office of the Deputy for Acquisition Management

Other Combatant Commands

- U.S. Central Command
- U.S. Joint Forces Command
- U.S. Northern Command
- U.S. Pacific Command

Military Services

- Office of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Strategic Plans and Policy Division, Missile Defense
- Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G-8, Force Development Directorate, Air and Missile Defense and Space Division
- Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Surface Warfare Division, Theater Air and Missile Defense Branch

Source: GAO.

Appendix II: The 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List

The Prioritized Capabilities List provided to the Missile Defense Agency in 2007 includes four categories of desired capabilities: weapons, sensors, battle management, and cross-functional capabilities. Each of the desired capabilities on the list is identified by a title and short description, and includes the following information:

- listing of the overall priority ranking of the capability, and whether the capability was ranked as one of the five highest priorities by one or more of the combatant commands;
- rationale for the capability;
- mission effect if the capability is not satisfied;
- summary of the applicable phases of flight, threats, and regions of operations; and
- key attributes, measures, and criteria for satisfying the capability.

Additionally, the classified U.S. Strategic Command report that conveys the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List to the Missile Defense Agency included a table that lists the combatant commands' consolidated capability needs in order from highest to lowest priority. This table also identifies the scores that each of the participating combatant commands assigned to these capabilities.

In preparing the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List, U.S. Strategic Command updated the 26 capabilities that had been identified and provided to the Missile Defense Agency in the first list in 2006. These updates and revisions were intended to eliminate redundancies and more clearly communicate the commands' intent. For example, the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List included a 27th capability capturing the need for effective communication standards, which previously had been embedded into multiple capabilities on the 2006 list. Short descriptions of the capabilities on the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List are provided in table 3.

Table 3: Capabilities on the 2007 Prioritized Capabilities List

I. Weapons Capabilities

| | |
|---|--|
| Employ Mobile Active Defense Assets in Response to Emergent Threats ^a | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to employ mobile active defense assets that are able to defeat ballistic missile threats of all ranges in response to emergent threats. |
| Defend the Homeland Against Ballistic Missiles Other Than Intercontinental-Range Ballistic Missiles | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to defend the homeland against ballistic missile threats other than intercontinental-range ballistic missiles. |
| Defeat Ballistic Missiles in the Terminal Phase (Sea-Based) | Provide the joint warfighter with a sea-based capability to defeat ballistic missile threats in the terminal phase from appropriate named area of interest. |
| Defeat Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to simultaneously defeat intercontinental ballistic missile threats from different regions, e.g., Northeast Asia and the Middle East. |
| Defeat Ballistic Missiles in the Boost Phase | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to defeat in the boost phase all ballistic missile threats launched from any named area of interest. |
| Defeat Ballistic Missiles in the Terminal Phase | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to defeat in the terminal phase all ballistic missiles that threaten the designated defended area. |

II. Sensor Capabilities

| | |
|--|---|
| Determine Accurate Launch and Impact Points ^b | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to predict accurate launch and impact points of threat objects early in the battlespace. |
| Discriminate Warhead/Reentry Vehicles ^c | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to discriminate warheads and reentry vehicles during midcourse and terminal phases of flight. |
| Classify Threat Missiles | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to classify each threat missile. |
| Recall Multi-Mission Sensors to the Missile Defense Mission | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to rapidly recall all missile defense capable multi-mission sensors to the missile defense mission. |
| Deploy and Integrate Mobile Sensors in Response to Emergent Threats ^d | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to deploy and integrate mobile sensors with existing systems in response to emergent threats. |
| Assess Engagement Success | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to assess engagement success in all phases of flight (boost, midcourse, and terminal) against all types of missiles. |
| Detect, Track, and Correlate Threat Objects ^e | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to detect and track threat objects and correlate their trajectories from named areas of interest in order to successfully perform engagement operations. |
| Use Missile Defense Sensors to Support Other Mission Areas | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to use missile defense sensors to support other mission areas. |
| Track and Report Predicted Impact Points of Debris | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to track and report projected impact points of all meaningful debris from an intercept, including partial or unsuccessful intercept. |

III. Battle Management Capabilities

| | |
|---|---|
| Conform to Communication Management Infrastructure Requirements | Provide the joint warfighter with ballistic missile defense communication systems, whose elements conform to current warfighter communication management infrastructure requirements, both theater and strategic. |
| Conduct Integrated Planning | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to conduct integrated planning. |
| Manage Multiple Engagements | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to manage multiple engagements simultaneously within their theater/area of responsibility. |

**Appendix II: The 2007 Prioritized
Capabilities List**

III. Battle Management Capabilities (cont.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Interoperate with DOD Command, Control, Communications, and Computer Systems and Infrastructure | Provide the joint warfighter with a missile defense system that interoperates with fielded DOD command, control, communications, and computer systems and an infrastructure that supports communications and data transfer. |
|---|---|

IV. Cross-Functional Capabilities

| | |
|---|--|
| Conduct Training | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to conduct distributed, high fidelity, and end-to-end training for missile defense operations that incorporates missile warning activity. |
| Provide Single Integrated Ballistic Missile Defense Picture ^f | Provide the joint warfighter with a single integrated ballistic missile defense picture. |
| Share Releasable Missile Defense System Data with Allies | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability for allies to share releasable missile defense system data. Inherent in this capability is the ability to receive data from our allies as well. |
| Avoid Hazards and Safeguard Against Inadvertent Firing of Weapons and Misidentification of Space Launches | Provide the joint warfighter with a missile defense system that avoids unnecessary hazards to operators and non-combatants and safeguards against inadvertent firing of weapons and misidentification of space launches. |
| Sustain Operations | Provide the joint warfighter with the capability to sustain operations while simultaneously supporting concurrent research, development, test, and evaluation; maintenance; training; and system upgrade activities without degrading protection capability. |
| Provide System Modeling Tools | Provide the joint warfighter with system modeling tools that reflect the most accurate and realistic estimates of system performance to support capability analysis; training; tactics, techniques, and procedure development; and contingency and crisis action planning. |
| Maintain Operational Availability | Provide the joint warfighter with a missile defense system that maintains operational availability through all natural and induced environments. |
| Ensure Missile Defense Communications ^g | Provide the joint warfighter with missile defense system communications that enable desired information exchange requirements within operational timelines. |

Source: U.S. Strategic Command.

^aOriginally titled "Employ Mobile Active Defense"; re-written to more clearly identify the need for mobile assets that can be deployed where needed.

^bOriginally titled "Predict Accurate Impact Points"; rewritten to more fully capture the intent of the capability.

^cOriginally titled "Discriminate Threat Objects"; rewritten to use more precise terminology.

^dOriginally titled "Deploy and Integrate Sensors"; rewritten to more clearly identify the need for mobile assets that can be deployed where needed.

^eOriginally titled "Detect, Track, and Classify Threat Trajectories"; rewritten to eliminate redundancy with another capability statement ("Classify Missile Threats") and to more clearly identify the need for track correlation.

^fOriginally titled "Provide a Single Integrated Ballistic Missile Defense Picture"; rewritten to reflect preferred terminology.

^gDoes not identify a new capability, but reduces redundancy from the 2006 list by capturing communications standards within a single capability statement.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense



ACQUISITION
TECHNOLOGY
AND LOGISTICS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
3000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3000

JUL 23 2008

Mr. John H. Pendleton
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U. S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-08-740, "BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE: Actions Needed to Improve Process for Identifying and Addressing Combatant Command Priorities," dated June 18, 2008 (GAO Code 351081).

The DoD concurs with three and partially concurs with two of the five draft report recommendations. The rationales for our positions are included in the enclosure.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report. My point of contact for this effort is Mr. Greg Hulcher, (703) 695-2680, greg.hulcher@osd.mil.

Sincerely,

David G. Ahern
Director
Portfolio Systems Acquisition

Enclosure:
As stated



GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED JUNE 18, 2008
GAO-08-740 (GAO CODE 351081)

"BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE: ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPROVE
PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING COMBATANT COMMAND
PRIORITIES"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the Director, Missile Defense Agency, to complete and publish the implementation guidance needed to clearly define each organization's roles and responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. Department of Defense has initiated the implementing guidance to define the organizational roles and responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses. As recommended, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) established implementation guidance by approving United States Strategic Command Instruction (SI) 538-3, "Missile Defense Warfighter Involvement Process (WIP)," on June 25, 2008. This implementing instruction defines and establishes the missile defense WIP and outlines USSTRATCOM's roles and responsibilities to influence the development, coordination, administration, and advocacy of global missile defense capabilities. To complement the USSTRATCOM guidance, the Missile Defense Agency is in the process of defining guidance for their organizational roles and responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the Director, Missile Defense Agency, to establish effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Commander, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) and the Director, Missile Defense Agency (MDA) are implementing effective methodologies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses under the Ballistic Missile Defense System structure. The USSTRATCOM, Combatant Commands, Services and MDA continue to refine the methodology for identifying and prioritizing combatant command capability needs for ballistic missile defenses. The methodology refinements will be used in development of the third list, Prioritized Capabilities List 2009. The two preceding

efforts provided valuable information to MDA to meet warfighter needs. USSTRATCOM expects additional methodology refinement to most effectively identify, prioritize, and address Combatant Command capability needs. Prior iterations have led to an increasingly sophisticated product to impact MDA decisions. However, this does not invalidate prior activity. The Department's goal remains a clear portrayal of Combatant Commands' needs.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, in conjunction with the other Combatant Commands, to prepare an assessment of the Missile Defense Agency's funding plans compared to the commands' priorities, and provide the assessment to the Director, Missile Defense Agency.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), as operational proponent and advocate for the Combatant Commands, is preparing a Capabilities Assessment Report of the Ballistic Missile Defense System, in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction 5134.9. The report examines the effectiveness and programmatic aspects of the ballistic missile defense system compared to the commands' priorities, examines the current capability acquisition funding, and identifies capability areas requiring greater emphasis. Although a prioritized list implicitly offers lower ranked items as sources of funding, no capability area may be totally overlooked if advances are to be made. Each item contributes to provision of ballistic missile defense capability to the warfighter. A Quick Look of this report was provided to the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) in June of 2008. USSTRATCOM will present the final assessment to the Director, MDA in the fall of 2008.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Missile Defense Executive Board to review each Prioritized Capabilities List upon its release, including the individual commands' priorities, and recommend to the Deputy Secretary of Defense an overall DoD-wide list of prioritized capabilities.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The Missile Defense Executive Board reviews the Prioritized Capability List produced by U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) as operational proponent and advocate for the Combatant Commands. Under Department of Defense Instruction 5134.9, "Missile Defense Agency" and United States Strategic Command Instruction 538-3 "Missile Defense Warfighter Involvement Process", USSTRATCOM develops, with Combatant Command participation, the Prioritized Capabilities List only for missile defense. DoD disagrees with the need for an overall DoD-wide list of prioritized capabilities as the USSTRATCOM Prioritized Capabilities List provides the Missile Defense Agency with a single prioritized list of warfighter needs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Deputy Secretary of Defense to provide guidance to the Director, Missile Defense Agency, on program priorities taking into account the Missile Defense Executive Board's recommendation.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Department of Defense (DoD) disagrees with the need for additional guidance from Deputy Secretary of Defense. DoD has adequate guidance for the Missile Defense Executive Board's recommendations to be considered by the Director, Missile Defense Agency (MDA). Under DoD Instruction 5134.9, the Director, MDA, reports to the Under Secretary for Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics). In addition, Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Missile Defense Executive Board", March 15, 2007, appointed the Under Secretary as Chair, Missile Defense Executive Board, with the Director as Executive Secretary. As Chair, Missile Defense Executive Board, the Under Secretary has recently established the process of issuing Acquisition Decision Memorandums to the Director regarding issues of importance to the Missile Defense Executive Board.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Gwendolyn R. Jaffe, Assistant Director; Grace A. Coleman; Nicolaas C. Cornelisse; Ronald La Due Lake; Jennifer E. Neer; Kevin L. O'Neill, Analyst in Charge; and Karen D. Thornton made significant contributions to this report.

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